

**PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP QUALITY  
AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT IN  
FRAGILE FAMILIES**

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PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND  
FATHER INVOLVEMENT IN FRAGILE FAMILIES\*

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## INTRODUCTION

Dramatic changes in U.S. demography in recent decades have fundamentally altered the state of America's families. As new family forms have emerged, social scientists have endeavored to document and describe the underlying trends and to understand their causes and consequences. Nonmarital childbearing has received particular attention, both because it reflects fundamental changes in family formation behavior and related social norms (Moore 1995), and because of the public policy concern that unmarried mothers with children are at greater risk of poverty and welfare use (McLanahan 1995).

In spite of the interest in nonmarital childbearing, little is known about the relationships between parents who have children outside of marriage. These parents and their children are often referred to as "fragile families" because they are at greater risk of poverty and dissolution than more traditional families. Using new data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, this paper will provide information about the quality of relationships between unmarried mothers and fathers and about the father's involvement around the time of the child's birth.

## BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The proportion of children born to unmarried parents has risen dramatically in the past 40 years, with nearly one-third of births now occurring outside of marriage. The proportions are even higher among minority populations—40 percent among Hispanics and 70 percent among African Americans (Ventura et al. 1995). While we know quite a bit about the characteristics of women who give birth outside of marriage (Moore 1995), much remains to be learned about the nature of relationships between unmarried parents. In some instances, unmarried parents are living together in a marriage-like relationship. In others, they have a close relationship, but the father lives in a separate household. In still other cases, the father has virtually no contact with

either the mother or the child. New research shows that more than four-fifths of unmarried couples are in a romantic relationship—and just under half of all unmarried couples are living together—at the time of the child’s birth (McLanahan, Garfinkel and Waller 1999). In order to understand how unmarried-parent families may differ from more traditional families, it is important to examine the nature of parents’ relationships across different types of fragile families. Also, little information exists about the role of fathers in these families and how they may—or may not—be involved during the pregnancy and after the child is born. Although national, representative samples are increasingly being used to investigate father involvement, many of the existing studies have used small and unrepresentative samples (Marsiglio and Day 1998). Also, recent research that examines multiple facets of father involvement has focused on married fathers only (e.g. Harris, Furstenberg and Marmer 1996). The Fragile Families Study provides a unique opportunity to examine an understudied group of parents using a large sample of unmarried parents (that will become nationally representative after all data are available).

Research has shown that fathers are more likely to be involved with their children if the relationship with the child’s mother, particularly within marriage, is positive (Gottman 1998; Belsky et al. 1991). For unmarried parents, a conflicted relationship between mother and father discourages positive father involvement, while an amicable relationship supports healthy father-child interaction (Coley and Chase-Lansdale 1998; Danziger and Radin 1990; Seltzer 1991). This is because family “sub-systems” are linked, and what occurs in the mother-father relationship has an important effect on parent-child relationships (Aldous, Mulligan and Bjarnason 1998; Amato 1998). Men are less able than women to separate feelings resulting from the marriage from those generated by relationships with their children (Belsky et al. 1991); this likely holds true for mother-father relationships outside of marriage as well.

Drawing on family systems theory, most previous studies have specified parents' relationship quality as a predictor of father involvement, and we follow the same approach in this paper. Yet, because family relationships are highly interdependent and reciprocal in nature, other causal mechanisms are possible. It could be that father involvement affects the quality of the mother-father relationship; for example, the father may value his relationship with the child, and in order to preserve access to his child, he may invest in the relationship with the child's mother. Or, both parents' relationship quality and father involvement could be affected by some third variable; for example, very religious fathers might have an a priori commitment to family such that they will invest heavily in both the mother-father relationship and the father-child relationship. Given the cross-sectional nature of our data, we can only estimate the correlation between parents' relationship quality and father involvement. Consistent with previous research, we specify parents' relationship quality as a predictor of father involvement, yet we recognize that other causal directions are possible.

#### DATA AND SAMPLE

We use data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a new national study designed to provide a longitudinal examination of the conditions and capabilities of new unmarried parents and the consequences for children. Among other factors, the study provides information about the nature of relationships between unmarried mothers and fathers, and how these parents are involved with their children. Ultimately, the study will follow a birth cohort of 3,600 children born to unmarried parents in twenty U.S. cities; the full sample will be representative of all nonmarital births to parents residing in cities with populations over 200,000. Also, a comparison group of married parents is interviewed in each of the twenty cities, and the full sample of married births will be approximately 1,100. New mothers are interviewed in

person at the hospital within 48 hours of having given birth, and fathers are interviewed in person either in the hospital or are located as soon as possible thereafter. Follow-up interviews will be conducted when the child is 12, 30 and 48 months old.

In this paper, we use data from the baseline interviews in the first seven cities in the Fragile Families Study—Oakland, California; Austin, Texas; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; Richmond, Virginia; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Newark, New Jersey. Our sample includes the 1,765 unmarried mothers who were interviewed shortly after the child's birth in these cities. While not included in the regression analyses, we also present descriptive information on a comparison group of 546 married mothers.

#### VARIABLES

Our primary independent variables of interest represent three dimensions of the quality of the mother-father relationship—conflict, supportiveness and companionship. For the conflict items, mothers indicate whether they have “never,” “sometimes,” or “often” had conflict over the following in the last month: (1) money, (2) spending time together, (3) sex, (4) the pregnancy, (5) drinking or drug use, and (6) being faithful. Although we originally created an index of overall conflict, analysis of the separate items showed that the effects of conflict differed across the various areas. Thus, we include each of the individual conflict items separately in the models.

Supportiveness in the relationship is measured by mothers' reports about the frequency that the father (1) is fair and willing to compromise when they have a disagreement, (2) hits or slaps her when he is angry (coding was reversed), (3) expresses affection or love, (4) insults or criticizes her or her ideas (coding was reversed), and (5) encourages or helps her to do things that

are important to her.<sup>1</sup> Again, response options are “never,” “sometimes” and “often;” for the two items reflecting negative behaviors (hits or slaps, and insults or criticizes), “never” was coded as high. Factor analysis showed that these items could be combined into a single index, so the items were averaged to obtain an overall supportiveness score (range=1 to 3;  $\alpha=.654$ ); higher scores indicate a greater level of supportiveness.

Companionship is represented by mothers’ reports of whether they have done any of the following four activities with the baby’s father in the past month: (1) visited with friends, (2) gone out to a movie, sporting event or some other entertainment, (3) ate out in a restaurant, and (4) helped each other solve a problem. The “yes” responses were added to create a summary measure representing the total number of activities done together, ranging from 0 to 4 ( $\alpha=.753$ ).

For mothers who are romantically involved with the father, their reports about the frequency of conflict and activities done together refer to the month prior to the survey (and thus, the month prior to the birth); for the supportiveness items and the hitting/slapping indicator, no specific time period is referenced.<sup>2</sup> For mothers who are not romantically involved at the time of the survey, their reports about conflict refer to the “when [they] were last together,” and the time frame for the activities done together is “the last month” that the couple was together; no specific time period is specified for the supportiveness items.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the timing of the inquiry vis-à-vis the status of the relationship may affect the nature of the reports. For couples who are no longer together at the time of birth, the mothers are reporting about the last month they were together prior to the break-up which we might expect to have been a

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<sup>1</sup> Initially, we included hit or slapped as a separate item. However, because this item was correlated with other variables in the models, the direction of the effect in regression models (hitting/slapping predicted *greater* father involvement) was opposite that demonstrated in bivariate analyses (hitting/slapping reduces father involvement).

<sup>2</sup> The question reads: “Thinking about your relationship with [baby’s father], how often would you say that...”

particularly contentious time in the relationship. For couples who remain romantically involved at the time of the birth, the mothers are reporting about the previous month which we might expect to have been a particularly positive time given the anticipation of the baby. Thus, differences in relationship quality between couples who are and are not romantically involved may be somewhat exaggerated.

Our dependent variables include six indicators of father involvement. Conceptually, we divide the six outcomes into three categories. The first category includes two indicators of the father's involvement during the pregnancy—whether he gave money or another kind of help to the mother.<sup>4</sup> The second category includes indicators of involvement around the time of the birth—whether the father visited the mother in the hospital, whether the father's name will be on the birth certificate, and whether the child will have the father's last name. Finally, we have an indicator of the mother's attitude toward father involvement—whether she says that she wants the father to be involved in raising the child; this item provides an indication of the extent to which a mother may act as “gatekeeper” preventing the father from having access to the child(ren).

Demographic characteristics include categorical variables for mother's age (less than 20, 20-24, 25-29, and 30 and higher), race (white, non-Hispanic; black, non-Hispanic, Hispanic and other/don't know) and educational attainment (less than high school, high school degree, some college or higher), as well as a dummy variable for whether the father was working in the week prior to the survey.<sup>5</sup> Finally, dummy variables are included to represent the three types of family

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<sup>3</sup> The question reads: “Thinking about your past relationship with [baby's father], how often would you say that...”

<sup>4</sup> The question asked of mothers about other kinds of help is: “Did [baby's father] help you in other ways, such as providing transportation to the pre-natal clinic or helping with chores?”

<sup>5</sup> More detailed information is not available about the father's employment history. Thus, we use whether the father worked in the previous week as a proxy for his overall labor force attachment.



status at the time of the birth—whether the couple is cohabiting, romantically involved but living apart, or not romantically involved.

## METHODS

After presenting some descriptive statistics about parents' relationship quality and father involvement, we estimate logistic regression models for each of our six measures of father involvement. For each outcome, we estimate two models. The first model includes the three relationship quality variables, along with the demographic controls. In the second model, we add the family status variables (cohabiting is the omitted category). It is important to control family status in order to determine whether relationship quality has a unique effect that does not simply reflect the frequency or proximity of the couple's interaction. For the regression results, we report log odds ratios in the tables.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the frequencies on each of the individual measures of relationship quality, as well as the means on each of the indices,<sup>6</sup> in the three different categories of unmarried parents (cohabiting, romantic living apart and not romantically involved). We also show information for the comparison group of married couples. As can be seen, of the three types of unmarried parents, cohabitators experience higher levels of relationship quality along the three dimensions, but cohabitators have generally more conflict and lower levels of supportiveness and companionship than the comparison group of married mothers. On some of the indicators cohabitators appear to be more similar to married couples, and on other indicators they are more similar to the romantic couples living apart. With respect to conflict, cohabitators are more similar to romantic, apart couples for conflict over money, spending time together, sex and drinking or drug use, while they appear more similar to married couples for conflict over the pregnancy and

being faithful. For all items of supportiveness and companionship, cohabiting couples appear to be somewhat more similar to married couples than to their non-cohabiting, unmarried counterparts.

As would be expected, the highest level of conflict, and the lowest levels of supportiveness and companionship are noted among the non-romantic couples; this group was (obviously) together at some point but has separated sometime during the pregnancy, perhaps because of conflict over whether to continue the pregnancy. More than 20 percent of mothers who are not romantically involved with the father at birth indicated that they often had disagreements over money, spending time together, the pregnancy or being faithful.

Taken together, although some of the distinctions are not large, it appears that with respect to relationship quality, couples may fall into a spectrum of sorts, with married couples demonstrating the least conflict and the highest levels of supportiveness and companionship, followed by cohabiting couples, romantic couples living apart and couples who are no longer romantically involved, respectively. For example, the proportion of mothers who report that the father is often fair and willing to compromise is 66 percent of married mothers, 56 percent of cohabiting mothers, 41 percent of romantically-involved but non-cohabiting mothers and 25 percent of mothers who are not in a romantic relationship with the father.

In Table 2, the top panel shows frequencies on the six father involvement indicators for the three groups of unmarried parents (presumably all married fathers are involved in these ways, so the survey does not provide information on these indicators for married couples). Father involvement is highest among the cohabitators, lowest among those couples who are not romantically involved and falls in between for couples who are romantic but living separately.

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<sup>6</sup> The mean of the conflict items is shown, although the individual items are included in the regressions.

For example, 94 percent of cohabiting fathers gave money or bought things for the baby during the pregnancy compared to 83 percent of romantic, non-cohabiting couples and 40 percent of non-romantic couples. The figures are more similar between the two categories of romantic couples with respect to whether the father's name will be on the birth certificate (97 and 91 percent for cohabiting and non-cohabiting, respectively) and whether the mother wants the father involved in raising the child (100 and 97 percent, respectively). Two-thirds of mothers who are not romantically involved with the father at the time of the child's birth say that they want the father to be involved.

The bottom panel of Table 2 shows frequencies on the demographic characteristics by family status. Of all unmarried mothers, 8 percent are white, non-Hispanic, 69 percent black, non-Hispanic, 19 percent Hispanic and 4 percent of undetermined race. A relatively lower proportion of blacks are in a cohabiting relationship compared to whites and Hispanics. Blacks are disproportionately in the group that is romantic, living apart. With respect to age, mothers who are no longer romantically involved with the child's father are similar in mean age to cohabiters (means not shown), while mothers who are romantic but living apart are slightly younger, on average. About three-fifths of both cohabiting mothers and mothers who are not romantically involved with the father have a high school degree, while the comparable figure for romantic couples living apart is slightly lower at 56 percent. Mothers in cohabiting relationships report the highest level of fathers' employment in the week prior to the survey (77 percent), compared to fathers romantically involved but not cohabiting (65 percent), and fathers in non-romantic couples (70 percent). For married mothers, higher proportions are white or Hispanic—and a lower proportion is black—than unmarried mothers; also, married mothers are older, have

higher educational attainment and are more likely to report that the father worked in the previous week.

Regression results are presented in Tables 3 through 5. Model 1 includes all relationship quality variables with the background demographic characteristics, and model 2 adds dummy variables for family status (cohabiting is omitted category). For all outcomes, the magnitude of the relationship quality variables is reduced in model 2 when family status is controlled, yet the substantive conclusions do not change notably.

Log odds ratios for the two indicators of father involvement during the pregnancy are shown in Table 3.<sup>7</sup> The results show that conflict over the pregnancy is associated with a lower likelihood that the father gave money (highly significant) or helped the mother in a non-monetary way (only significant in model 1) during the pregnancy. This is not surprising given that we would expect fathers who did not want to have a child (as implied by the couple's frequent conflict over the pregnancy) to be less likely to contribute. Conflict over drinking or drugs has a significant effect on the likelihood that the father gave money, and the direction of the effect is the same for other kinds of help (though not significant). None of the other conflict items are significantly associated with either of these outcomes. With respect to direction of the effects, conflict over money has a positive effect on giving other help as does conflict over spending time together for both types of fathers' contributions during the pregnancy. Conflict over sex and over being faithful are ambiguous with respect to how they affect these two types of father involvement during the pregnancy; the direction of the effects is not consistent across the two outcomes.

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<sup>7</sup> Conflict over money was removed from the equation predicting whether the father gave money to the mother during the pregnancy because such conflict is likely endogenous to the outcome (i.e. the father's *not* giving money may result in conflict).

Companionship and supportiveness both have a strong positive association with father's giving money and giving other help during the pregnancy. Chi-square tests for equality of the effects shows that supportiveness has a larger effect than companionship on whether fathers provide both types of assistance during the pregnancy.

With respect to the demographic characteristics, it is notable that compared to white mothers, black mothers and Hispanic mothers are significantly more likely to report that the father gave them money during the pregnancy. Black mothers are also more likely to report that the father gave other help during the pregnancy. One possible interpretation of this result is that because blacks are less likely to marry than whites, family relationships for unmarried parents may be more similar to those for married parents for blacks, with unmarried black fathers demonstrating relatively greater involvement in fathering than their white (unmarried) counterparts. Fathers who are employed are more likely to have given both money and other help during the pregnancy; this would be expected because employed fathers are more likely to have income and other resources with which to assist mothers. Finally, compared to mothers who are cohabiting, both categories of non-cohabiting parents (romantic and non-romantic) are significantly less likely to have received monetary support from the father during the pregnancy.

Estimates for father involvement outcomes around the time of the child's birth are shown in Table 4. Overall, the conflict items are not strongly associated with these three indicators of father involvement. One exception is that conflict over money increases the likelihood that the father visited in the hospital (model 1), but this effect is no longer significant after family status is controlled in model 2. Also, conflict over the pregnancy significantly decreases the likelihood that the father visited in the hospital; such conflict also significantly decreases the likelihood that the father's name will be on the birth certificate in the first model, but this effect diminishes after

family status is controlled in model 2. In terms of the direction of effects, conflict over money and spending time together positively affect father involvement; for conflict over sex, the direction of the effect differs between the outcomes of visiting in the hospital (positive) and the other two outcomes (negative). Conflict over drinking or drug use and being faithful do not show consistent effects across the three outcomes.

Companionship has a strong, positive association with all three indicators of father involvement around the time of the child's birth—an increased number of activities done together in the previous month increases the likelihood that the father visited the mother in the hospital, that his name will be on the birth certificate and that the child will have his last name. Father's supportiveness has a positive effect on the likelihood that the father visited in the hospital, although this effect is reduced to insignificance once the status of the relationship is controlled in model 2. Supportiveness shows a strong positive effect on the likelihood that the father's name will be on the birth certificate and the likelihood that the child will have the father's last name.

Only a few demographic characteristics are related to the three outcomes in Table 4. Race does not appear to be significantly associated with the outcomes, with the exception that Hispanic mothers are nearly three times as likely to say that the child will have the father's last name. Mothers age 30 and older are less likely to have been visited by the father in the hospital. Father's having worked last week has a significant, positive effect on the likelihood that the father visited the mother—those who worked are nearly twice as likely to have visited. This may reflect cultural norms about fatherhood and the male provider role; those who are employed may feel more “legitimate” as fathers and thus more comfortable visibly assuming other aspects of the father role.

Family status is strongly associated with each of the father involvement outcomes at the time of the child's birth. Compared to cohabiting families, for both couples who are romantically involved but living apart and those who are no longer romantically involved, the father is significantly less likely to be involved on all three of these measures. The negative effect on father involvement of the couple's not being romantically involved is significantly larger than the negative effect on father involvement of being romantic but living apart (relative to cohabitators) across all three indicators.

The final table shows results for whether the mother wants the father to be involved with the child. While not a direct measure of father involvement, this measure indicates the mother's openness to the father's being involved and the extent to which she may act as a "gatekeeper" to prevent the father from having access to the child. The frequency of conflict over money increases the likelihood that the mother wants the father involved. Again, companionship and supportiveness are both significantly associated with a higher likelihood that the mother wants the father to be involved.

Among the other variables in the models, black and Hispanic race are positively associated with the mother wanting the father to be involved, although neither reaches statistical significance. Mothers age 30 and older are significantly less likely to want the father involved compared to mothers ages 20-24. Although marginally significant, having at least some college education is linked with a greater likelihood of the mother wanting the father involved compared to mothers with only a high school education. Also, both categories of non-cohabiting mothers are significantly less likely to want the father to be involved than cohabiting mothers.

In order to investigate whether conflict may operate differently in the three types of unmarried relationships, we estimated separate models for all outcomes for each of the three

types. Then, we created interaction terms for conflict items where different effects were noted among the three types. Nearly all of these interaction terms were insignificant and unstable. While non-romantic couples have notably higher conflict across all items than other unmarried couples (see Table 1), the effect of conflict does not appear to operate differently for this group overall. Only the interaction for conflict over the pregnancy by non-romantic status had a significant effect in the expected direction for one outcome: conflict over the pregnancy appears to be particularly detrimental to fathers' contributing financially for those couples who were not romantically involved when the child was born. This is not surprising given that the pregnancy may have been one of the major factors in the couple's breaking off their relationship; the father may not have wanted the baby, and he is thus no longer romantically involved with the mother and also does not want to contribute financially. The absence of other significant interaction effects is striking given the higher level of conflict among non-romantic couples and the fact that these relationships appear to be qualitatively different than those among couples who remain romantically involved.

## DISCUSSION

These results provide strong support for the association between parents' relationship quality and father involvement; this association is not largely attenuated by including variables for family status at the time of birth. Companionship and supportiveness are two dimensions of the mother-father relationship that are particularly linked to fathers' involvement both during the pregnancy and at the time of the child's birth, as well as with mothers' wanting the father to be involved: if the mother reports that the couple does more activities together and that the father displays more supportive behavior in the relationship, he is more likely to have demonstrated involvement along the six indicators we examined. Tests for equality indicated that for most of



the father involvement indicators, supportiveness is a significantly stronger predictor than companionship.

Contrary to our initial expectations, the measures of conflict do not have consistent (and significant) negative effects on father involvement, and the various types of conflict appear to operate differently. Conflict over money positively (and significantly) affects whether the mother wants the father to be involved and has a positive but non-significant effect on the other outcomes. While a non-trivial proportion of all unmarried couples often disagree about spending time together (from 17 percent of cohabitators to 25 percent of non-romantic couples), this type of conflict does not significantly reduce the likelihood of father involvement. In fact, such conflict is positively associated with each of the father involvement indicators. As described earlier about conflict over money, it could be that disagreements about spending time together actually indicates something positive about the couple's relationship—that they remain engaged in trying to work out the relationship.

Conflict over the pregnancy is associated with a lower likelihood that the father is involved, although the effect is not always significant. Since the mother has continued the pregnancy and has given birth, we would expect that conflict over the pregnancy indicates that the father did *not* want the baby. Thus, it is not surprising that such conflict is negatively related to father involvement. For four of the six outcomes, conflict over drinking and drug use is linked to a lower likelihood of father involvement, but the effect is only significant for the father's giving money during the pregnancy. Finally, the effect of conflict over being faithful is small in magnitude and is not consistent across the six outcomes; this indicator of conflict does not specify *whose* unfaithfulness is the source of the conflict, so it may have different meanings across couples.

Our research shows that the *positive* dimensions within the relationship may be more important in predicting father involvement than how often the parents experience disagreements. It could be that the frequency of conflict does not adequately reflect the tone or severity of the conflict. Given that all relationships involve some conflict at various points, it may be far more important how that conflict is handled than the fact that it occurs or occurs often. Thus, frequency of conflict may be a rather crude measure. This idea is supported by the positive effects on father involvement noted for conflict over money and spending time together. As stated earlier, these types of “conflict” may reflect simply that the couple is working to resolve their differences. On the other hand, conflict over the pregnancy or drinking or drugs may reflect more serious problems that fundamentally destabilize the relationship and reduce the father’s investment in parenting.

As noted in our conceptual framework above, it is important to recognize that the mother-father relationship and father involvement may be reciprocally related or may both be affected by a third factor. While we find strong linkages between parents’ relationship quality and father involvement, our methodological approach does not enable us to test various causal pathways. In future research, as longitudinal data become available, we hope to better disentangle how mother-father and father-child processes may be related. Also, it is important to highlight that family relationships are not static but dynamic, and therefore, caution is warranted with using a point-in-time assessment of relationship quality. Further, for those couples who are romantically involved at the time of the survey, their assessments may be somewhat more positive because they may be drawn together by the “magic moment” of the child’s birth. On the contrary, for those couples who are no longer romantically involved, their reports about the relationship with the baby’s father may be particularly negative both because they are reporting about the last

month they were with the father (which was likely a conflicted time) and because the birth of the baby (by a man with whom they are no longer involved) may cause them to reflect negatively about the past relationship.

Despite these limitations, this paper provides new information about mother-father relationships and father involvement in unmarried-parent families—a growing demographic group. Our research documents notable variation in relationship quality among different categories of unmarried parents, with cohabitators demonstrating the lowest levels of conflict and the highest levels of supportiveness and companionship. We find that parents' relationship quality, particularly as reflected in supportiveness and companionship, is strongly related to fathers' involvement during the pregnancy and at the time of the child's birth. In future research, using data from the follow-up surveys as children age, we hope to examine parents' relationship quality over time and to evaluate more specifically the nature of fathers' involvement with their children.

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Table 1. Parents' Relationship Quality as Reported by Mothers, by Family Type

	Total Unmarried	Cohabiting	Romantic Apart	Not Romantic	Married
<u>Parental Conflict</u>					
Couple often has disagreements over:					
Money	16.2	15.1	15.3	20.9	9.3
Spending time together	20.2	17.3	22.1	24.5	10.7
Sex	10.6	9.4	10.9	13.3	6.9
The pregnancy	9.4	4.0	10.8	21.3	2.8
Drinking or drug use	5.3	3.3	4.3	12.8	0.9
Being faithful	13.1	6.8	14.8	26.6	4.3
<i>Overall mean (range=1 to 3)</i>	1.47	1.42	1.48	1.63	1.32
<u>Father's Supportiveness<sup>1</sup></u>					
The father:					
Is often fair and willing to compromise	45.5	56.4	40.9	24.8	65.5
Never hits or slaps you when angry	95.0	96.2	96.5	88.5	97.2
Often expresses affection or love	69.9	81.0	70.3	39.1	86.6
Never insults or criticizes you or your ideas	69.5	69.7	72.9	62.3	73.1
Often encourages or helps you to do things that are important to you	66.9	78.4	67.8	33.8	81.7
<i>Overall mean (range= 1 to 3)</i>	2.64	2.74	2.65	2.33	2.79
<u>Companionship (activities together in last month)</u>					
Visited with friends	64.7	77.8	60.4	38.3	82.1
Gone out to movie, sporting event, or other entertainment	55.7	67.0	50.4	35.7	69.5
Ate out in a restaurant	62.9	77.9	56.1	36.4	83.2
Helped each other solve a problem	75.7	90.3	72.8	42.5	94.6
<i>Overall sum (range=0 to 4)</i>	2.55	3.06	2.36	1.50	3.26
<u>Correlations<sup>2</sup></u>					
Conflict and supportiveness	-.372				
Conflict and companionship	-.081				
Supportiveness and companionship	.374				
Sample size (n)	1,765	840	612	313	546

<sup>1</sup>Frequencies for married couples on these items include data for only 5 cities--Baltimore, Detroit, Newark, Philadelphia and Richmond (n=387).

<sup>2</sup>All correlations are significant at  $p < .001$ .

Table 2. Reported Father Involvement and Demographic Characteristics  
for Unmarried Mothers, by Family Type

		Total Unmarried (100%)	Cohabiting (47.6%)	Romantic Apart (34.7%)	Not Romantic (17.7%)
<u>Father Involvement</u>					
During pregnancy, baby's father gave money or bought things for the baby		80.7	94.4	82.9	39.9
During pregnancy, baby's father helped in other ways		78.8	95.4	79.2	33.4
Baby's father visited mother in hospital		74.8	90.5	72.6	37.1
Father's name will be on the birth certificate					
Yes		87.8	97.1	90.6	57.7
No		9.3	2.4	6.4	32.9
Don't know		2.9	0.5	3.0	9.4
Baby will have the father's last name					
Yes		76.6	90.7	74.5	43.0
No		20.6	7.5	21.2	54.1
Don't know		2.8	1.7	4.2	3.0
Does mother want father involved in raising child					
Yes		93.1	99.9	96.7	67.5
No		5.8	0.1	2.6	27.3
Don't know		1.1	0.0	0.7	5.2
<u>Demographic Characteristics</u>	<u>Married</u>				
Mother's race					
White, non-Hispanic	33.3	8.0	9.8	4.6	9.9
Black, non-Hispanic	34.6	69.2	62.2	79.5	67.7
Hispanic	24.7	19.0	25.1	11.5	17.6
Other/don't know	7.3	3.8	3.0	4.4	4.8
Mother's age					
Less than 20	3.5	23.6	19.3	29.3	23.6
Ages 20-24	20.7	38.0	41.0	35.9	33.9
Ages 25-29	31.9	22.2	23.2	19.3	24.9
30 and older	44.0	16.3	16.5	15.4	17.6
Mother's education					
Less than HS	21.3	40.9	39.7	43.5	39.3
High school degree	22.9	36.2	35.1	37.6	36.1
Some college or higher	55.9	22.9	25.2	18.8	24.6
Father worked last week	89.2	71.7	76.6	65.3	69.8

Table 3. Estimated Log Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models:  
Father Involvement During the Pregnancy

	Gave Money		Gave Other Help	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<u>Parents' Relationship Quality</u>				
Frequency of conflict over (range=1 to 3):				
Money	(not in models)		1.133	1.020
Spending time together	1.170	1.132	1.190	1.185
Sex	.988	.972	1.156	1.198
The pregnancy	.622 ***	.692 ***	.687 ***	.812
Drinking or drug use	.702 **	.731 **	.830	.878
Being faithful	1.070	1.200	.809 *	.927
Companionship index (range=0 to 4)	1.686 ***	1.484 ***	1.923 ***	1.691 ***
Father's supportiveness index (range=1 to 3)	5.246 ***	3.849 ***	4.794 ***	3.387 ***
<u>Demographic Characteristics</u>				
Mother's race (omitted=white, non-Hispanic)				
Black, non-Hispanic	2.183 ***	2.451 ***	1.677 *	1.985 **
Hispanic	2.305 **	2.138 **	1.398	1.200
Other/don't know	1.633	1.636	2.326 *	2.563 *
Mother's age (omitted=ages 20-24)				
Less than 20	.834	.963	.765	.938
Ages 25-29	.935	.960	1.393	1.556 *
30 and older	1.217	1.106	1.066	.974
Mother's education (omitted=HS degree)				
Less than HS degree	1.007	.904	1.197	1.063
Some college or higher	.908	.929	.739	.696
Father worked last week	1.372 *	1.615 **	1.236	1.465 **
<u>Family status (omitted=cohabiting)</u>				
Romantic, living apart		.503 ***		.266 ***
Not romantically involved		.121 ***		.072 ***
Chi-square	293.2 ***	376.2 ***	342.8 ***	460.5 ***
d.f.	16	18	17	19
Log likelihood	-511.4	-469.8	-522.3	-463.4
Sample size (n)	1,551	1,551	1,554	1,554

\* $p < .10$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .01$



Table 4. Estimated Log Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models:  
Father Involvement at the Time of the Child's Birth

	Father Visited Mother in the Hospital		Father's Name Will Be on Birth Certificate		Child Will Have Father's Last Name	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<u>Parents' Relationship Quality</u>						
Frequency of conflict over (range=1 to 3):						
Money	1.253 **	1.179	1.214	1.136	1.017	.918
Spending time together	1.062	1.051	1.249	1.216	1.046	1.048
Sex	1.174	1.164	.838	.810	.913	.881
The pregnancy	.691 ***	.766 **	.702 **	.799	.910	1.046
Drinking or drug use	1.114	1.182	1.151	1.230	.842	.873
Being faithful	.928	1.030	1.061	1.203	.842 *	.940
Companionship index (range=0 to 4)	1.744 ***	1.586 ***	1.442 ***	1.236 ***	1.306 ***	1.153 ***
Father's supportiveness index (range=1 to 3)	1.642 **	1.148	3.486 ***	2.223 ***	2.761 ***	2.007 ***
<u>Demographic Characteristics</u>						
Mother's race (omitted=white, non-Hispanic)						
Black, non-Hispanic	.686	.724	1.380	1.455	.995	1.083
Hispanic	1.185	1.067	2.095 *	1.825	2.879 ***	2.724 ***
Other/don't know	1.585	1.732	1.324	1.321	1.553	1.575
Mother's age (omitted=ages 20-24)						
Less than 20	.983	1.096	.764	.855	.904	1.020
Ages 25-29	.916	.914	.888	.898	1.362	1.428 *
30 and older	.692 *	.627 **	.828	.713	.907	.816
Mother's education (omitted=HS degree)						
Less than HS degree	.875	.816	.897	.821	.845	.773
Some college or higher	1.159	1.145	1.044	1.074	.835	.810
Father worked last week	1.750 ***	1.988 ***	1.251	1.420	1.037	1.105
<u>Family status (omitted=cohabiting)</u>						
Romantic, living apart		.475 ***		.395 ***		.369 ***
Not romantically involved		.159 ***		.100 ***		.138 ***
Chi-square	272.5 ***	344.7 ***	110.6 ***	177.5 ***	149.6 ***	241.0 ***
d.f.	17	19	17	19	17	19
Log likelihood	-660.4	-624.3	-404.2	-370.7	-687.2	-641.5
Sample size (n)	1,553	1,553	1,536	1,536	1,502	1,502

\* $p < .10$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .01$

Table 5. Estimated Log Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models:  
Mother Wants the Father to Be Involved in Raising the Child

	Model 1	Model 2
<u>Parents' Relationship Quality</u>		
Frequency of conflict over (range=1 to 3):		
Money	1.982 ***	2.153 ***
Spending time together	1.154	1.013
Sex	.827	.802
The pregnancy	.897	1.043
Drinking or drug use	.698	.761
Being faithful	1.049	1.204
Companionship index (range=0 to 4)	1.709 ***	1.307 **
Father's supportiveness index (range=1 to 3)	10.320 ***	6.253 ***
<u>Demographic Characteristics</u>		
Mother's race (omitted=white, non-Hispanic)		
Black, non-Hispanic	1.934	2.097
Hispanic	2.450	2.196
Other/don't know	1.204	.930
Mother's age (omitted=ages 20-24)		
Less than 20	.488 *	.567
Ages 25-29	.514	.460
30 and older	.548	.347 **
Mother's education (omitted=HS degree)		
Less than HS degree	1.515	1.369
Some college or higher	1.718	2.181 *
Father worked last week	1.135	1.517
<u>Family status (omitted=cohabiting)</u>		
Romantic, living apart		.098 **
Not romantically involved		.009 ***
Chi-square	130.6 ***	211.0 ***
d.f.	17	19
Log likelihood	-182.2	-142.0
Sample size (n)	1,552	1,552

\* $p < .10$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .01$